

# Charles Ritchie: Where Dreams and Reality Collide

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By Michael Schwartz '14

More than 70 people gathered in Arcadia University's MainStage theater the evening of Jan. 23 to enter the dreamscape of Charles Ritchie, Artist and Associate Curator of Modern Prints and Drawings at National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. In his lecture, "34 Years of Keeping a Journal: Notes on a Daily Practice," Ritchie addressed the evolution of his craft of self-discovery.

Ritchie is a dedicated artist who takes notes of his dreams through a series of recollections in his vast array of journals. Through both words and drawings, he has spent the last 34 years recording his dreams through a meticulous, daily practice. Ritchie has received national recognition as his works are held in numerous museums and galleries such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Yale University Art Gallery.

The fascinating and detailed presentation of his work consisted of beautiful, shaded paintings as well as complex written passages based on his dreams. His descriptive journals truly served as a portal into his mesmerizing mind.

When asked what motivates his daily journaling practice, Ritchie responded, "It's a great way to get sort of closer to yourself and take time for yourself especially in this kind of modern world where we are so bombarded with such clutter that you know it's really important that we stop and breathe and look inside and see where we are, who we are, and what we are.

"You can see it as meditation or even exercise. It's a kind of way of exercising one's mind and inventive capacities and building on them and sharpening them in a way and being more and more in tuned with the world."

Art Gallery Director **Richard Torchia** admires Ritchie's passion and focus for his craft. "This lecture offered such a wide ranging look at his practice," he says. "In addition to demonstrating the relationship between his journals and his finished artwork, he offered a selective history of artist journals and a sampling of the poetry that is at the core of his work. Anybody who was here clearly got a comprehensive picture of what Charlie Ritchie's work is about."

Ritchie also left quite an impression on the crowd. **Derek Shuffield '13** was most struck by Ritchie's dedication, noting his admiration for Ritchie's prodigious use of a single idea. "He worked really hard at one central focus by taking and incorporating so many things, and that's what I enjoyed the most," says Shuffield.

Near the end of the lecture, Ritchie summed up the ideas his journals evoke. "It is about reality and the imagination," he says. "I see my books as two streams of deep subconscious and the pure imagination of dreams coming out and trying to be somewhere in the world. And then the images of the world, what we could consider as the real world being filtered through the imagination and coming down to settle into these books."

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